

HONORING THE SELECTION OF A.J. BENSEN FOR THE JUNIOR OLYMPIC ARCHERY TEAM

**HON. JOHN E. SWEENEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 20, 2000*

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend a young man on an exemplary achievement. Allastair John Bensen, known to his friends and family as A.J., was selected as a member of the 2000 Junior Olympic Team for Archery. This honor comes after many years of practice and dedication.

A.J. began shooting for fun with his father, John, when he was five years old. As his skills improved, they began competing in the Capital Land Bowhunters 3-D Shoots as well as other archery competitions throughout the Capital Region, the Hudson Valley, the Adirondacks and the Catskills. Over the years, A.J. has won a number of trophies, medals and several plaques, including more than fifteen first place finishes. In 1999, A.J. and his father placed second in the father-son category of the DARE shoot, held in Middleburgh, NY. This spring A.J. participated in the Triple Crown, an event where participants compete in three separate shoots. Overall, A.J. placed higher than any other competitor and secured the Triple Crown Trophy. For A.J., placing first at the regions paramount archery event transformed a weekend hobby into an opportunity to compete on the national level.

A.J. was selected to compete in the United States Junior Olympics and National Association of Police Athletic League Youth Festival held in Detroit, Michigan from July 18-24, 2000. The regional team of archers is sponsored by the Albany Police Departments Police Athletic League program. Under the coaching and direction of Officer Jim Teller, the team has prepared rigorously for this nationally acclaimed event. These young people should be commended for their dedication and achievement.

A.J. and his parents, John and Jeanne Bensen, reside in Greenville, New York, within the 22nd Congressional District. In addition to his archery accomplishment, A.J. is a first class Boy Scout, a Black Belt in Budokai (traditional Japanese) Karate and an honor student at Greenville Central Middle School. A.J. is twelve years old and is an energetic and motivated young man whose efforts deserve recognition.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I congratulate A.J. Bensen on his selection to the Junior Olympic Archery Team. I hope my colleagues will join me as I commend this achievement and wish A.J. the very best of luck in all his future endeavors.

LOW-INCOME FAMILIES HURT BY U.S.-CANADA SOFTWOOD LUMBER AGREEMENT

**HON. JIM KOLBE**

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 20, 2000*

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, on February 16, 2000, I introduced, along with my colleague Representative STENY HOYER, H. Con. Res.

252, calling for an end to the U.S./Canada Softwood Lumber Agreement when it expires in 2001. The resolution was introduced with 30 bipartisan original cosponsors. There are now 115 cosponsors from all regions of the country and the number is growing every day. The purpose of the resolution is to: (1) Ensure a competitive North American market for softwood lumber; (2) ensure free trade regarding softwood lumber between the U.S. and Canada; (3) ensure all stakeholders are included in discussions regarding trade of softwood lumber; and, (4) ensure that the Softwood Lumber Agreement is allowed to terminate when it expires in 2001. By taking these steps, the negative impact on U.S. consumers and housing affordability can be eliminated.

The Softwood Lumber Agreement imposes quotas on lumber shipped from Canada to the United States. These quotas have a dramatic impact on the price and volatility of lumber, which jeopardizes affordable housing in America and hurts American consumers. A recent study by Brink Lindsay and Mark Groombridge of the Cato Institute entitled "Nailing the Homeowner: the Economic Impact of Trade Protection of the Softwood Lumber Industry," confirms the detrimental impact this agreement has on the American consumer. The authors calculated that trade restrictions imposed upon the American consumer by the Softwood Lumber Agreement added an estimated \$50 to \$80 per thousand board feet to the price of lumber. The result is an addition of \$800 to \$1,300 to the cost of new home prices, thereby driving some 300,000 American families out of the housing market. Unfortunately, the bulk of these consumers are lower-income families.

The Softwood Lumber Agreement is the worst form of government market intervention, driving up consumer costs and distorting the free market. Fortunately, the agreement is set to expire on April 1, 2001. I hope that the Administration will seriously consider the impact of the Softwood Lumber Agreement on consumers within the United States and allow the agreement to expire with no extension or further quota agreement. If the administration wants to discuss softwood lumber and forestry matters with Canada, the President should include consumers in any discussion. I hope the Administration will notify interested members of the U.S. House of Representatives if such discussions are underway.

GEMS AND AFRICAN NATIONS

**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, July 20, 2000*

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, today I pass along information about how the diamonds at the heart of several African wars could be transformed from a curse into a blessing for its people.

Representative TONY HALL of Ohio has worked for months on the problems of conflict diamonds, in large part because of what he saw in Sierra Leone last December. Hundreds of thousands of people have been driven from their homes by fighting, tens of thousands have died, and countless numbers have watched as rebels hacked off their loved ones' arms, legs, ears, or noses.

Mr. HALL of Ohio has spoken many times about this, and I urge our colleagues to look at the diamonds that are symbols of love and commitment to Americans a little differently—and look into the role they play in the war machines in several African countries. Not all diamonds are bloody, but the industry collects 30 percent of its profits from the ones that are.

Today, there is reason to hope that the legitimate diamond industry is going to help choke off this terrible trade. I hope they will do more and endorse the proposals Congressman HALL made this week. Those suggestions are described in a thoughtful and interesting article from the Dayton Daily News. Its author, Kay Semion, points out ways that "gems could transform African lives." I urge our colleagues to take a moment to read it and I am submitting it for the RECORD.

[Dayton Daily News, July 19, 2000]

GEMS COULD TRANSFORM AFRICAN LIVES

(By Kay Semion)

Diamonds are not always a girl's best friend, U.S. Rep. Tony Hall says—not when they finance warlords who terrorize the people of Sierra Leone, Angola and other diamond-producing nations. The Dayton Democrat returned Monday to Washington from Antwerp, Belgium, where he had pleaded with the leaders of the World Diamond Congress to cut off these warlords and to help the countries they are devastating.

On one plan, he will likely be successful. The diamond industry is responding to pressures from him and others to trace diamonds so profits do not go into the bloody hands of rebel hoodlums. These outlaws are so greedy that they drug children and train them to be brutal warriors, who can cut off arms and legs without a moment of rue.

On another plea, however, diamond executives were silent. Hall urged them to help repair those nations that diamond warlords have torn apart.

He gave them two options: Contribute 1 percent of their profits to nation-building programs such as UNICEF or Doctors Without Borders. And begin a foundation—The Sparkle Fund—to support a micro-enterprise system for certain African nations.

"You could have heard a pin drop," Hall said of the reaction to his quests for investing in Africa. "There were 500 to 600 in the hall, and it was real quiet."

No wonder. It's easier to say you're sorry and won't do it again than it is to help those who have been harmed—even inadvertently.

But Hall is right. And his proposed Sparkle Fund is most promising, based on the successful micro-enterprise system developed by Muhammad Yunus.

Yunus is a Bangladeshi economist who was educated in the United States and returned to his country to teach about 25 years ago. In walks he took during leisure hours, he noticed that the women in villages were in a poverty cycle—making products but not profits because they were always in debt to the village loan sharks.

His efforts to get banks or governments to help failed, so in 1976 he set up a system that became known as the Grameen Bank. The "bank" began with small loans from his pocket—\$20 or \$30—so the women could buy supplies for making chairs or pottery. Borrowers became bank officers who then approved other loans. The process not only ensured that loans would be repaid but also provided help for those starting small enterprise businesses. Today that bank has 35,000 branches, hundreds of millions in loans and a 96 percent repayment rate.

Hall is asking the World Diamond Congress to borrow this successful economic model.